

**HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES  
PRIVATE ANGLING AND  
CHARTER/HEADBOAT VESSEL  
PERMITS**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) requires vessel permits for Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) (tunas, billfish, swordfish, and sharks) to monitor fishing effort, gain an understanding about fishery participants, distribute regulatory and other information, and collect data for management decisions.

**AUTHORIZED GEARS** – for Angling vessels and CHB vessels on a for-hire trip

Species	Authorized Gears
Billfishes	Rod & Reel
Swordfish	Rod & Reel Handline*
Sharks	Rod & Reel Handline*
Tunas	Rod & Reel Handline* Bandit Gear

\* A handline is defined as a mainline to which no more than two gangions or hooks are attached. A handline is retrieved by hand, not by mechanical means. A mainline with 3 or more hooks is considered a longline.

**REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Owners of HMS charter headboat (CHB) and HMS private recreational Angling vessels **must report all recreational** landings (*i.e.*, fish kept) of the following species to NMFS within 24 hours of landing at the dock:

- **Blue Marlin**
- **White Marlin**
- **Sailfish**
- **Swordfish**
- **Bluefin Tuna**

Landings of **marlins, sailfish, and swordfish** must be reported to NMFS by calling toll-free **1-800-894-5528**. During the call, the vessel owner will be asked to provide their name, contact phone number, HMS permit number, species caught, and appropriate length of fish. NMFS will return the call and provide a confirmation number for the reported landing.

Landings of **bluefin tuna** must be reported to NMFS by calling **1-888-872-8862** or by logging onto [www.hmspermits.gov](http://www.hmspermits.gov).

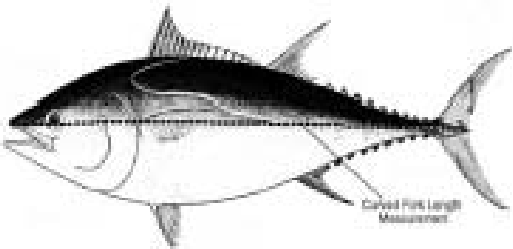
In Maryland and North Carolina, vessel owners should report their HMS landings at state-operated reporting stations. For reporting information in **Maryland**, contact **(410) 213-1531**. In **North Carolina**, contact **(800) 338-7804**. Vessel permit holders only need to report billfish and swordfish that are landed in registered tournaments if tournament operators do not report tournament landings. Vessel permit holders are responsible for determining whether tournament operators are reporting tournament related landings.

In addition, CHB operators must complete a logbook and submit cost-earnings information to NMFS, if selected.

**SIZE AND RETENTION LIMITS**

Recreational Limits for CHB and Angling trips		
Species	Minimum Size*	Retention Limits
Blue Marlin	99" (LJFL)	N/A
White Marlin	66" (LJFL)	N/A
Sailfish	63" (LJFL)	N/A
Longbill Spearfish	Prohibited	0
Swordfish	47" (LJFL) or, 29" (CK) or, 33 lbs dw	1/person up to 3/vessel per trip
Bigeye Tuna	27" (CFL)	N/A
Albacore Tuna	N/A	N/A
Yellowfin Tuna	27" (CFL)	3/person per day
Skipjack Tuna	N/A	N/A
Bluefin Tuna	Ang. Cat.	27" - <73" CFL Vary in season
		>73" CFL 1/ year
Sharks (excluding prohibited species)	54" FL**	1/vessel per trip**

\* Applies to billfish from the management unit (Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea) regardless of where caught; Atlantic swordfish in federal and international waters; Atlantic tunas in federal, international, and state waters (see 50 C.F.R. 635.1 for specific states); and Atlantic sharks in federal waters. Additional state regulations may also apply. \*\*With an allowance for one bonnethead and one Atlantic sharpnose shark per person per trip with no minimum size.



Curved Fork Length (CFL)



Cleithrum to Caudal Keel (CK)



Lower Jaw Fork Length (LJFL)



Fork Length (FL)

---

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Q. 1. When do I need an HMS CHB permit?

NMFS issues permits for the HMS CHB fishery and manages the fleet as a unique sector due to its mix of commercial and recreational operations. Owners of vessels that carry passengers for-hire and fish for, possess, or retain Atlantic HMS must obtain an annual HMS CHB permit. NMFS defines a “for-hire” trip as a trip carrying a fee-paying passenger; or having more than three persons for a vessel licensed to carry six or fewer; or having more persons aboard than the number of crew specified on the vessel’s Certificate of Inspection for U.S. Coast Guard inspected vessels. The number of persons aboard includes the operator and crew and the retention limits would also apply to the operator and crew. While fishing for or possessing Atlantic HMS, the vessel operator must have a valid Merchant Marine License or Uninspected Passenger Vessel License.

### Q. 2. What are the landing restrictions on HMS?

Sharks: Must have fins, head, and tail attached through landing. Sharks may be bled and gutted if the tail is still attached.

Billfish: Must have fins, head, attached through landing.

Swordfish: May be landed in round or dress form (headed and gutted).

Tuna: May be landed round with fins intact, or eviscerated with the head removed, but with one pectoral fin and the tail remaining attached.

---

### Q. 3. May I catch and release HMS?

NMFS encourages catch and release of Atlantic HMS, and the use of circle hooks to maximize post-release survival. A fish that is not retained must be released in a manner that will maximize its survival, and without removing it from the water.

### Q. 4. Where do I get tagging kits?

Call the Cooperative Tagging Program for tunas, swordfish, and billfish tag kits: (800) 437-3936. Call the Apex Predator Program for shark kits: (401) 782-3320.

### Q. 5. May billfishes (blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and spearfish) be sold?

No. The sale of all Atlantic billfish is prohibited regardless of permit type.

### Q. 6. May swordfish and sharks be sold?

No. However, commercial swordfish hangear and shark limited access permits may be combined with a recreational Angling or CHB category permit to allow sale of these species.

### Q. 7. May tuna be sold?

Recreational anglers with private HMS Angling permits may never sell any tunas. CHB permit holders may sell BFT > 73” when fishing under the General category regulations. CHB permit holders may never sell BFT < 73”. CHB holders may also sell Bigeye, Albacore, Yellowfin and Skipjack (BAYS) tunas on for-hire trips, up to the recreational limits of tunas. On non-for-hire trips, there are no limits on the number of BAYS tunas that may be retained and sold.

---

## NEED MORE INFORMATION?

[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms)

[www.hmspermits.gov](http://www.hmspermits.gov)

### FOR PERMITS:

#### *Recreational, CHB and Atlantic Tuna:*

NMFS Permit Shop 888-872-8862 and dial 0 for a Customer Representative or go to [www.hmspermits.gov](http://www.hmspermits.gov).

*Commercial Swordfish and sharks, renewals and transfers:* Southeast Regional Permit Office 727-824-5326

### FOR REGULATIONS:

#### *Tuna:*

HMS Gloucester 978-281-9260

#### *Shark, Swordfish:*

HMS Headquarters 301-713-2347

#### *Recreational Swordfish & Billfish:*

HMS St. Petersburg 727-824-5399

### FOR COPIES OF DOCUMENTS:

#### *Write to:*

DOC/NOAA

National Marine Fisheries Service

Highly Migratory Species Management Division

1315 East-West Highway

Silver Spring MD 20910

#### *Or visit:*

[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms).

---

# Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Angling and Charter/Headboat Vessel Permit & Recreational Reporting Requirements



## National Marine Fisheries Service

Office of Sustainable Fisheries,  
Highly Migratory Species Management  
Division

This pamphlet provides a brief summary of recreational HMS regulations as of March 2006. For the complete and official set of regulations, see 50 CFR part 635 and the Federal Register or call the Highly Migratory Species Management Division at 301-713-2347. If there is a discrepancy between the regulations in 50 CFR part 635 and this brochure, the regulations will take precedence. This brochure is produced in compliance with Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.